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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES CDOT AND CTA LAUNCHING POP-UP
ESSENTIAL BUS LANES PROGRAM**

Dedicated, Temporary Bus Lanes on Essential Bus Corridors Will Improve Bus Reliability and Make Social Distancing Easier for CTA Customers

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot announced today that the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) are launching Pop-Up Essential Bus Lanes as part of a pilot on two of the City's highest ridership routes, Chicago Avenue (#66) and 79th Street (#79). These temporary, dedicated lanes will prioritize bus service for essential workers and other transit riders by converting travel lanes in both directions to 24-hour dedicated bus lanes. These lanes can help to reduce bus delays and bus bunching, which may lead to crowding and longer bus trips, both of which are counter to the City's and CTA's efforts to promote social distancing.

"CTA buses remain critical and reliable transit resources for those—especially on our city's South and West sides—who do not have the luxury of being able to work from home," said Mayor Lightfoot. "This program is the first step to ensure our residents will continue to have convenient access to public transportation throughout the pandemic and after. I am excited to double down on our investment in our renowned transit system and look forward to increasing the quality of commuting for our essential workers and other residents who ride the bus."



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“Today’s announcement is a reflection of our ongoing and tireless efforts to seek out new and additional measures to provide everyone with a safe and healthy travel environment that encourages social distancing,” said CTA President Dorval R. Carter, Jr. “Public transit has been a critical lifeline for the City throughout the pandemic and measures such as this will help ensure we can continue to safely support our City’s re-opening efforts.”

The first phase of the City’s Pop-Up Essential Bus Lanes will convert 7.6 lane miles to dedicated bus lanes, providing nearly 20,000 transit riders with more reliable bus service each day. The temporary CTA bus lanes will be installed on three miles of 79th Street, from Cicero to Western, and for 4.6 miles on Chicago Avenue, from Laramie to Ashland. CTA and CDOT identified 79th Street and Chicago Avenue routes for the initial program rollout due to their high ridership and capacity to convert one of its two travel lanes to a bus-only lane. The bus lanes will be demarcated with temporary striping and signage. Under the pilot project, right turns will be permitted at all intersections and current curbside access will be maintained. Parking, loading zones and driveways will not be affected.

Creation of the dedicated bus lanes will begin in the coming weeks, and the pilot is expected to be in effect for at least six months while officials evaluate the impact on ridership, operations and the evolving context of the COVID- 19 public health crisis. Additional routes and route segments are being considered for inclusion in future phases of the project.

As Chicago continues on a cautious path to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, traffic volumes are slowly climbing toward pre-pandemic levels, which can cause bus delays and bus bunching. The dedicated lanes are aimed at keeping buses operating at regular intervals on these heavily used routes at a time when the CTA is diligently working to facilitate social distancing on its buses. Keeping transit working safely and smoothly is critical to help prevent clogging of streets by private vehicles. Preventing crowding on buses is also key to a more equitable recovery as it helps to protect Chicagoans who are reliant on public transit and do not have access to a personal car.

“CTA bus service is a critical part of Chicago’s transportation network that has provided a lifeline for many of our most essential workers throughout the pandemic,” CDOT Commissioner Gia Biagi said. “As we continue to reimagine how we use our streets, CDOT is committed to working with the CTA to prioritize bus service and making it the go-to option for safe and reliable travel around the City.”



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The Pop-Up Essential Bus Lanes plan is an additional transportation initiative undertaken by Chicago in response to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. Through the “Our Streets” program, CDOT has been testing new uses for city streets, creating more than 10 miles of temporary Shared Streets that allow Chicagoans to walk, push strollers and bike safely. In addition, more than 300 restaurants have participated in Make Way for Dining, which uses space normally reserved for cars to temporarily create space for safe, outdoor dining. CDOT has also launched an expansion of the Divvy bikeshare system to cover the full Far South Side of Chicago - providing an additional transportation option and connection to existing transit options – on the way to full citywide expansion by 2021.

In 2019, the Lightfoot administration identified \$20 million in new funding for the Bus Priority Zone Program – a joint CTA and CDOT initiative designed to improve bus travel times and make service more reliable on seven core routes. In 2019, Bus Priority Zone improvements were installed at eight locations, several of which were also along Chicago Avenue or 79th St (additional details available at <https://www.transitchicago.com/newsprojects/bpz/>) The next set of Bus Priority Zones are being developed and are intended to provide additional permanent treatments to prioritize bus service, including installation of designated bus only lanes, new pavement markings, street-level and overhead signage, optimizing of bus stop locations, as well as other operational and safety improvements such as curb extensions and pedestrian refuge islands.

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